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**DONNA SEIDEL**  
**STATE REPRESENTATIVE**  
**85TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT**

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**Testimony of Rep. Donna Seidel**  
**Assembly Bill 144**  
**Senate Committee on Judiciary, Corrections, and Housing**  
**March 12, 2008**

Good morning Chairwoman Taylor and members of the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of AB 144.

Under Wisconsin law, there are several prohibitions and penalties regarding a person who intentionally escapes from the custody of a law enforcement officer after being arrested. The current escape law does not apply to an offender that attempts to escape while in the custody of a probation or parole agent.

This legislation would extend the definition of escape to cover cases where agents have taken an offender into secure custody and placed him or her in restraints, or are transporting offenders after taking them into custody.

The Assembly adopted two amendments. Assembly Amendment 1 corrects a drafting error to bring the felony charge levied for this offense inline with current escape law. A person on probation, parole or extended supervision who escapes from his or her probation, parole or extended supervision officer while being detained would be guilty of a Class H felony, which carries a fine of up to \$10,000 and imprisonment of no more than 6 years. If the officer is injured during the escape, the sentence may be increased.

Assembly Amendment 2 addresses two language changes requested by the Department of Corrections at the public hearing in the Assembly Committee. The bill now refers to probation, parole and extended supervision agents rather than officers and adds correctional officers to be covered under the new law.

The bill also prohibits juvenile offenders from escaping a caseworker, an intake worker or dispositional services worker if he or she has been detained for a violation of a dispositional order or a condition of aftercare supervision.

I worked closely with Representative Kreuser on this legislation. He will be testifying on the importance of these changes to the escape law and an incident in Kenosha County that brought to light the need for this bill.

Thank you for your attention to this important legislation.



**TESTIMONY OF QALALA CHAMPAGNE, ADMINISTRATOR,  
DIVISION OF COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS  
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS  
AB 144, RELATING TO ESCAPES BY OFFENDERS ON COMMUNITY  
SUPERVISION  
Senate Committee on Judiciary, Corrections and Housing  
March 12, 2008**

Good morning, Chairperson Taylor and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary, Corrections and Housing. My name is Qalala Champagne. I am the Administrator of the Division of Community Corrections at the Department of Corrections. I am here to speak in support of Assembly Bill 144 which would expand the definition of the crime of escape to cover situations where a person on probation, parole or extended supervision intentionally escapes from his or her supervising agent, if the person has been detained based on a violation of his or her supervision.

Under current law, there are no criminal penalties for these escapes. This kind of conduct is very serious, and can jeopardize the safety of our agents and the public. The Department of Corrections strongly supports making this conduct a crime.

Currently the Division of Community Corrections is responsible for the supervision of over 70,000 persons on probation, parole or extended supervision. There are a total of 1200 state agents to do this work. Agents play a key role in protecting public safety in communities across Wisconsin. Their duties and responsibilities include conducting home visits and other face-to-face meetings with offenders, developing and enforcing rules of supervision, assisting offenders to obtain employment, treatment, and other services, working closely with local law enforcement on criminal investigations and other public safety issues.

Another important agent role is transporting offenders in custody situations. In many instances, law enforcement officers transport our offenders. We do, however, complete numerous transports, including from one county jail to another and from county jail to the state prison system. All agents receive specialized training upon their appointment and all receive annual update training on the department's certified arrest, custody and transportation program. This training provides the agents with the skills to properly use restraints, de-escalation, communication and self defense.

Thankfully, the number of instances where offenders have escaped while being transported in secure custody is relatively few. On average this occurs about five (5) times a year. This low number is due in large part to our well-trained and professional agents. However, when it does occur, it is potentially dangerous to our staff and others in the community. This fact was highlighted on August 28, 2006 when state division of community corrections agents, Kelly Brownson and Charles Sosinski were transporting an offender from the Milwaukee Secure

Detention Facility to the Kenosha County Jail. The offender caused physical harm to Agent Brownson while attempting to escape from their custody. Fortunately, two off duty Kenosha County Sheriff Department Detectives were in the immediate area and witnessed the event. They rendered aid to our agents and captured the offender as he tried to flee the scene on foot.

In closing, I want to thank the committee for providing me the opportunity to speak in favor of this bill and I am available to answer any questions from members of the committee.